
KANSAS RADx-UP COVID-19 HEAT TOOLKIT

Background

Underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in Kansas have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

On May 10, 2020, Kansas had the dubious distinction of having the greatest racial disparities in COVID-19 mortality in the United States. African Americans in Kansas have experienced a 4-fold higher mortality rate, whereas the Latinx community has experienced 7-fold higher infection rate than non-Hispanic whites.

Publicly reported data may seriously underestimate disparities in COVID-19 infections.

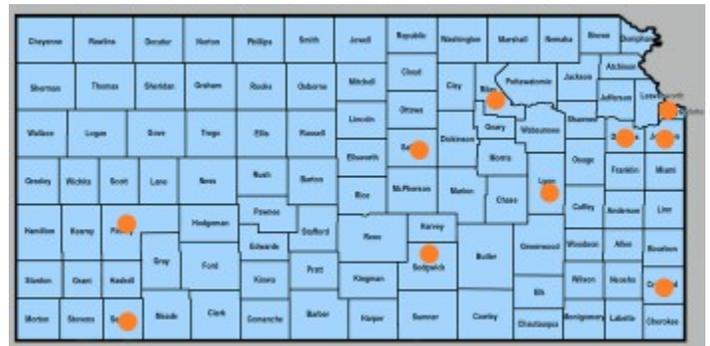
Despite ranking 12th in the US, with a 10.3% test positivity rate (more than twice the recommended CDC threshold of 5%), Kansas ranks 43rd in the country in terms of per capita testing for COVID-19 with only 75 tests conducted per 1,000 residents.

Many at-risk Kansas residents, particularly in under-represented and rural communities, are not getting tested. This low rate of testing is not due to an overall shortage of testing supplies; we are currently using about 1/3 of our daily state testing capacity. Rather, preliminary data suggest a myriad of other factors, including worksite policies, fear of job loss or forced quarantine, fear that immigration status could be revealed, lack of trust in governmental institutions, and lack of access to healthcare.

Kansas RADx-UP Grant

The University of Kansas Medical Center received a grant from the National Institutes of Health's Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics for Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) initiative. The purpose of the grant is to support projects across Kansas designed to rapidly implement COVID-19 testing strategies in populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The grant is partnering with community efforts in six rural counties (Crawford, Finney, Lyon, Riley, Saline, Seward) and four urban counties (Douglas, Johnson, Sedgwick, Wyandotte). The goal is to establish community-led, health department-linked Local Health Equity Action Teams in all 10 counties, all disproportionately affected by



COVID-19, and provide them with resources to identify and respond to COVID-19-related inequities in their communities.

Identifying HEAT Members for Your County

Health Equity Action Teams (HEATs) need to be designed to reflect the diverse residents of your county. Some of the RADx-UP counties already have partnerships or coalitions that have been active in addressing community health, whereas others only have limited partnerships. As each of the 10 counties plan to develop or enhance their HEAT for the Kansas RADx-UP grant, below are some tools to assist the counties in identifying HEAT members.

Starting from scratch?

If your county has a limited history of collaborations or if there is not a collaboration focused on health or health equity, you might be identifying HEAT members from scratch. There are several ways you can go about doing that work. Here are a few considerations:

- 1) **Think about your county:** Begin by thinking about the different communities within your county. What populations or communities have been underserved or historically excluded? When you look at data about COVID-19 incidence, mortality, or health status and outcomes, which populations experience disproportionately bad outcomes?
- 2) **Map your organization's relationships:** Consider where you have existing relationships and where there are gaps in your relationships. Consider the underserved or historically excluded populations, what are your organization's relationships with those populations? What are important gaps that you need to fill? Be honest and candid when thinking about these relationships. Also, be mindful of the extent to which your existing relationships may be with people who have power or are the "usual suspects" who are often brought together to make decisions. Does this serve the goal of having a HEAT that consists of people who are underserved and historically excluded?
- 3) **Work with RADx-UP Consultants to help identify individuals and networks:** The RADx-UP project has several consultants who are available to help. They have experience with collaboration, and they have great connections throughout Kansas! They can provide consultation about how to think about the assets in your community and can broker connections to individuals in all counties. If you are interested in connecting with one of the consultants, please reach out to Angela Watson (awatson@kumc.edu) or Laura Mussulman (lmussulman@kumc.edu).

- 4) **Consider networks and organizations that are common resources and assets in communities.** Reach out to people within networks, resources, and assets in your county. These include:
 - a. Community colleges and universities (e.g., Butler County Community College, Highland County Community College, Emporia State)
 - b. Churches, faith organizations (e.g. churches that host non-English services)
 - c. Local Parent Teacher Associations/ Parent Teacher Organizations
 - d. Black and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
 - e. Social and cultural organizations
 - f. Social or human service organizations that serve specific populations
 - g. Neighborhood associations
 - h. Sororities and fraternities

- 5) **Create a list of potential HEAT members.** Create a list of people you want to recruit to the HEAT and/or stakeholders who might help identify potential HEAT members. Check out the How to Recruit HEAT Members section to find sample descriptions, talking points, and scripts to use when you reach out to the people on the list.

- 6) **When you identify a potential HEAT member, invite them and make them feel welcome to bring a friend or colleague.** When you develop new relationships, ask these potential HEAT members to recommend additional members who are interested in helping address COVID-19 in their community. People may want to check out the HEAT for themselves first, but it is helpful to say out loud and often that additional members representing underserved and historically excluded populations are welcome.

Already have a partnership or coalition in mind to serve as a HEAT?

Some communities have an existing partnership or coalition that may well serve as the county HEAT. Unless the existing partnership was constructed with ensuring representation of underserved or historically-excluded voices, it is still vitally important to consider how to expand the membership of the HEAT. Here are a few considerations:

- 1) **Assess the current membership of the group.** Begin with a list of current active members. Who is missing? Where are the gaps? Consider the demographics of your county's residents, including: gender, race, ethnicity, age, ability, income, education, sexual-orientation, and neighborhood. Are there current members who can help reach out to potential members of the HEAT? Are there any past or inactive members who need to be re-engaged?

- 2) **Talk to your existing members about their willingness to serve on the HEAT.** Ensure the existing HEAT members agree that the RADx-UP project is consistent with their mission and that they are willing to add the project to their current work. What concerns do they have? What opportunities do they think this will provide? How would they describe the current membership? Who do they recommend engaging to ensure that underserved or historically-excluded voices are represented?
- 3) **Assess how welcoming your partnership is to new members.** Bringing new people into an existing partnership can be a great opportunity if the members of the partnership are open to welcoming new members and creating a welcoming space. Check out the Community ToolBox Curriculum Checklist for Assessing Openness to New Members (Appendix A) to identify what the HEAT can do to create a more welcoming space.
- 4) **Need additional HEAT members to be better representative of the county's underserved communities?** If new members are needed, check out the tips in the previous section for identifying new members.

How to Recruit HEAT Members

To effectively recruit residents to be potential HEAT members, you will need to clearly communicate information to them via email or telephone. First, this includes a description of the HEAT as well as the overall RADx-UP initiative. Please see the boxes below for some sample language describing the RADx-UP initiative and the HEATs.

Description of the RADx-UP Initiative

Feel free to take this text and use it in ways that would be helpful to setting up a HEAT in your community.

Underserved or historically- excluded populations in Kansas have experienced disproportionately higher rates of COVID-19 incidence and mortality. The Kansas RADx-UP Initiative is designed to ensure that COVID-19 testing reaches people in Kansas communities who are underserved or historically excluded. The project is a collaborative effort of the University of Kansas Medical Center and 10 Kansas counties. The project includes funding and support to the 10 counties to identify and implement community-developed strategies for increasing COVID-19 testing.

Description of a HEAT

Feel free to take this text and use it in ways that would help you establish a HEAT in your county.

The Health Equity Action Team (HEAT) is a group of people brought together to identify and implement strategies for ensuring that COVID-19 testing reaches the people in our county who are underserved or have been historically excluded from community health efforts. Members of the HEAT are people who live in our community and represent those underserved or historically- excluded populations. The HEAT needs to reflect the diversity of the community (e.g., race, color, gender, age, ability, education, socio-economic status).

Members of the HEAT will:

- Attend local HEAT meetings and provide input and feedback.
- Voice concerns from their communities.
- Demonstrate commitment to developing an understanding on issues where they may have little expertise.
- Participate on HEAT committees and community work groups, as needed.
- Assist in the development and implementation of community testing, communication, and education activities (pop-up testing, community forums, community mobilization activities) and materials.
- Suggest strategies to address ethical and operational aspects of the RADx-UP project in your county.
- Advise in the development and implementation of testing and communication strategies.
- Provide real-life experiences.
- Serve as a resource to the county RADx-UP project manager, community educator, and research team.
- Help recruit and orient new HEAT members...continuously.

Second, you will need to describe what a HEAT is make a compelling case for why the HEAT is needed. Consider how you can use the following talking points for making a compelling case that the HEAT is needed:

1. Our county has longstanding inequities which have resulted in some residents having poorer health outcomes than others. *[You might consider having examples of those inequities and disparities on hand to call upon, and the RADx-UP team would be happy to help with that.]*
2. The COVID-19 crisis has brought some of those inequities to the forefront.
3. Preventing transmission of COVID-19, particularly among those who are underserved or have been historically excluded, is a priority for our county.
4. We need a HEAT to develop and implement strategies to make sure our COVID-19 testing and communication efforts reach underserved populations in our county. This work may set the stage for future COVID-19 vaccination outreach strategies and/or non-COVID-19 related health inequities.
5. The HEAT will provide an opportunity to help us gather a group of people who truly reflect the diversity of our community to address the challenge in front of us, and hopefully beyond COVID-19.

Third, you will need to reach out to people with a specific message about how you think they would make a valued contribution. Consider how they represent a unique voice and have had lived experience that will help shape the work of the HEAT. When you communicate with potential HEAT members, it is important that you tailor your message regarding the value of their potential contributions. Here is an example of text you might consider:

Hello, [Insert name here]. Thank you for taking time to meet with me. I am reaching out to see if you might be willing to serve as part of [a new group being formed/ our existing group] which will be focusing on making sure people who are part of groups that are historically excluded or underserved are reached by COVID-19 testing efforts.

You might have heard about this, but in our community, we have some longstanding inequities which have resulted in poorer health outcomes than others. For example [insert example here]. We know that those inequities have made some members of our community more vulnerable to COVID-19 than other members. This group is being formed to make sure that something is done about these inequities,

and to bring together a group of people committed to making sure that what is done will reach the people we need to reach.

I am reaching out to you because I think you [are an important member of our community/ represent an important perspective/ can bring a unique perspective or voice to our work.] I think you would make a valuable contribution. We think the group will meet monthly for about 90 minutes. We do have some resources that we can use to compensate you for your time. Is this something you would consider? Can I answer any questions?

Set Goals and Action Steps for Your HEAT's

Developing goals for the HEAT can be a great way to kickstart and maintain the HEAT's efforts. Developing action steps for those goals can help make an overwhelming task feel more manageable, as steps are developed and implemented together to make progress. Here are a few steps to help you get started.

- 1) Convene a county RADx-UP HEAT meeting by the end of January, if possible.
- 2) At this convening, consider the following loose agenda:
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Review the RADx-UP grant
 - c. Discuss the need for a county HEAT
 - d. Identify goals for the HEAT
 - e. Create action steps that will advance the HEAT's identified goals. Action steps are intended to be small tasks or activities that enable the group to make progress on a bigger goal.
 - f. Identify resources and supports that might be helpful.
 - g. Assign tasks to HEAT members and ensure that there is an equitable distribution of responsibilities.
 - h. Identify "due dates," when you will check in with your colleagues about progress.
 - i. Identify next meeting date.
- 3) Hold each other accountable for making progress.
- 4) Report progress on action steps. Create new (or adjust) action steps, as needed.

!

Remember that the RADx-UP staff and consultants can provide support and assistance with this task!

Reach out for ideas and assistance!

This table is a template for your HEAT to outline a goal and associated action steps.

Goal:			
Action Step:	Who will do it?	By when?	What resources or supports are needed?

This table is an example that might be helpful in thinking about how to create a goal and action steps.

Goal: Convene our first HEAT meeting by January 24, 2021			
Action Step:	Who will do it?	By when?	What resources or supports are needed?
Identify potential HEAT members and who can best reach out to them	Rev. Carter, Christal, and Mary	1/4	Talk with RADx-UP consultants about tips/ tools
Create an invitation for joining the HEAT	Mary	1/4	
Distribute the invitation to the new potential members	Rev. Carter, Christal, and Mary	1/6	
Distribute Doodle poll to people indicating willingness to be part of the HEAT	Mary	1/10	
Distribute meeting invite	Mary	1/15	
Set a meeting agenda	Rev. Carter, Christal, and Mary	1/15	
Create meeting materials	Rev. Carter, Christal, and Mary	1/15	Reach out to RADx-UP team for assistance with county COVID data

Meeting resources for HEATs

Several resources are available to support meetings. For example, below is a sample meeting agenda.

Sample HEAT Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Icebreaker [This site has many, many examples of icebreakers to consider via Zoom or other online meeting software:
<https://www.rhythmsystems.com/blog/the-best-icebreakers-to-energize-your-virtual-meetings>]
- Review background information:
 - What is the RADx-UP project?
 - How does our HEAT fit into the RADx-UP project?
- COVID-19 in our county
 - COVID-19 by the numbers
 - Discussion: What has your experience been of COVID-19 in the county?
- Discussion: What do we want this HEAT to accomplish by September 2022?
- Identify key informants: One of the first tasks the county HEAT needs to perform is to identify key informants in the county for someone to best understand the experiences of people who are underserved or historically- excluded regarding COVID-19 testing in the county.
- Discussion: Meeting times, frequency, and logistics
- Review next steps:
 - Consider what populations need to be prioritized for our work as a HEAT. Who are the underserved and historically excluded in our county?
 - Look forward to needs assessment findings.

If you need help with facilitating meetings, these websites are great resources:

- <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox/facilitation/facilitation-tools/core-practices>
- <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilitationmeeting>
- <https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/beyond-inclusion.html>
- <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/main>

In addition, there are great tools for facilitating zoom (or other web conferencing platforms). The SFU Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue's *Tipsheet for Accessibility and Equity in Online Engagement during COVID-19* (Appendix B). is a great resource.

Heat Needs Assessment Activities

The research team requests your HEAT's involvement in three activities early in the project.

First, identify key informants.

Key informants are members of underserved populations or serve as leaders for and/or represent underserved populations. Populations may be underserved due to a variety of factors such as poverty, race, ethnicity, age, ability, employment status, and immigration status. Key informants could include community and organizational representatives (e.g. faith, community, public health leaders) – including your Health Equity Action Team (HEAT) members! Consider this an opportunity to invite in new perspectives to inform your work. The research team will conduct key informant interviews through January/early February 2021.

At your first HEAT meeting, we ask that HEATs identify 8-12 key informants in your county. HEAT members will reach out to these potential key informants to obtain agreement to be contacted by RADx-UP staff for an interview. Please provide the names and contact information for each key informant as s/he agrees to participate. Interviews will be conducted in English; if key informants require a different language, please notify the RADx-UP staff. Each key informant will receive a \$25 electronic Amazon gift card for completing the interview and a brief demographic survey.

Second, administer community surveys.

In addition to the key informant interviews, the research team will assist the county HEAT in assessing county residents' perceptions of testing and identify unmet social and economic needs. We encourage county HEATs to identify populations in your county who may be underserved due to a variety of factors such as poverty, race, ethnicity, age, ability, employment status, and immigration status. Consider how you might be able to access these populations to administer an online survey. The research team will support county HEATs with the survey administration in February or early March 2021.

HEATs will determine how and where to distribute the online survey link in each county. HEAT members are encouraged to identify mechanisms to distribute the survey link to 100 at-large county residents from underserved populations. Each survey respondent will receive a \$10 electronic gift card. The survey will be available in English and Spanish. Other languages will be considered if identified in specific communities. If your county requires an additional language, please notify RADx-UP staff.

Third, review the county report.

In March 2021, the research team will provide your county HEAT with a county-specific report that will include de-identified, aggregated data from the key informants and online surveys. This report can be used to inform your testing interventions for underserved populations in your county.

RADx-UP Needs Assessment Staff

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Appendix A.

Community ToolBox Curriculum Checklist for Assessing Openness to New Members

Activity 8.3a

Assessing Openness to the Engagement of New Community Members

Time: 20 minutes

Goal: This activity will involve participants in reflection of their personal and organizational readiness or openness to become truly engaged with new participants. It will help identify any possible issues that require consideration before attracting new community members to the effort.

Steps:

1. Individually or in pairs, make use of the checklist (“Do I” column) on the next page (which reflects the principles of this chapter) to “rate” on a scale from one to five (1–5) your current personal readiness to engage with others who might join your effort.
2. A facilitator will use a whiteboard, flipchart or overhead projector, or otherwise make an enlarged version of the checklist. As a large group, keeping in mind the skills and readiness levels of different individuals, use the “Do We” column to try to reach consensus “ratings” on the same (1–5) scale for your overall organization’s current level of readiness to embrace and engage new members to the effort.
3. Discuss any obvious gaps in how you currently work to involve new members in your effort, and ways in which you might improve as an organization. If possible, determine priorities for training, enhancing sensitivity, or improving the programs, policies, or practices of the organization.
4. If the group wishes, identify ways in which individuals may be supported in their personal growth and development in this regard. If you open this conversation, be sure there is some commitment on the part of the whole to support the risk-taking and requests for support from individuals.

Carrying It Forward

What areas scored higher? In what areas were scores lower? Consider ways you might individually, as well as collectively, work to improve your openness to engagement with new members.

Activity 8.3a (cont.)

Assessing our Openness to the Engagement of New Community Members

Checklist and Ranking		
1 = Never 2 = Not Usually 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always		
<i>Do I:</i>	<i>Do We:</i>	Motivate Involvement
		1. Know the interests of my (our) audience
		2. Recognize that groups are made up of individuals
		3. Recognize strengths
		4. Recognize needs
		5. Ask people individually for their participation
		6. Make participants feel welcome: listen and take them seriously
		7. Match individual talents, skills, knowledge, and experience with needs
		8. Show appreciation for each person’s contributions
		9. Establish good communication within the group and among different groups
		10. Support other interests of the people you work with
		11. Know yourself (and your interests)
		12. Define and clarify the vision and mission of the group early on
		13. Remain organized
		14. Use meeting time wisely
		15. Communicate a positive attitude about chances for success
Build Relationships		
		1. Understand that relationships take time and require risk
		2. Establish relationships before you need them
		3. Establish relationships in a crisis
		4. Build relationships with those who have an interest and can help
		5. Build relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds
		6. Build relationships with people who hold positions of power and influence
		7. Build relationships with opponents
Make Involvement Easier and More Rewarding		
		1. Communicate “sticky” or memorable messages of the value of the effort
		2. Make involvement more rewarding or attractive by increasing available positive reinforcement
		3. Make participation easier and of lower cost
		4. Communicate that involvement improves participants’ abilities and broadens social networks

Appendix B

The SFU Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue's Tipsheet for Accessibility and Equity in Online Engagement during COVID-19

Tipsheet for Accessibility and Equity in Online Engagement during COVID-19



Online tools and platforms can help increase accessibility to public engagement initiatives for those facing barriers related to geographic distance, physical mobility or scheduling conflicts. However, it is important to remain mindful of barriers that can impede people from learning about, accessing or participating safely and meaningfully in a digital engagement process.

The following table outlines potential barriers related specifically to online engagement, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with questions to consider and strategies that can help address these barriers. For broader accessibility and equity considerations that may still impact online engagement, see p. 57-73 the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue’s 2020 guide [Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement](#).

Barriers	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
<p>Digital Accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do some groups of people lack digital devices (phones, computers) at home, or might they be sharing them with other members of their household? • Do some groups of people lack a stable internet connection at home? • Do some groups of people lack the digital literacy to navigate the engagement platform? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer offline avenues for outreach and participation (mail-outs, telephone conference connections, telephone surveys, text messages or radio phone-in shows) • Give preference to low-bandwidth, mobile-friendly, text-based engagement platforms • Consider loaning or sponsoring equipment, mobile data cards or WiFi hubs • Use platforms that are familiar to the key audiences, and/or that are easy to navigate (e.g. social media, or platforms that don’t require downloads) • Send a “how-to” guide beforehand, and schedule time for testing and orientation
<p>Language and Communication</p>	<p>Are your methods for outreach and engagement accessible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people with lower levels of literacy? • people who are Deaf/deaf/hard of hearing? • people who are blind/low vision? • people with speech impairments? • people who are not fluent in the dominant language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine multiple modes of communication, such as text, audio, video and/or graphics • Provide real-time translation in relevant languages, ASL interpretation, and/or live captioning • Use large, accessible font • Add captions to images and videos • Ensure that digital materials are accessible by screen readers • Use plain language, with limited jargon • Do not speak quickly, and make space for participants to reflect and respond at a comfortable pace



Barriers	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
<p>Date and Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might work, caregiving, household chores or other responsibilities impact people's availability? Could this impact some groups of people (e.g. women) more than others? • Is the engagement accessible for community members still working essential jobs outside of home during the COVID-19 pandemic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer asynchronous channels for participation (e.g. discussion forums) • Respect start and end times • When videoconferencing, acknowledge the likelihood of interruptions from family or pets! • Offer breaks in longer sessions
<p>Safety and Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do some participating communities commonly face harassment in online spaces? • Has the COVID-19 pandemic increased discrimination or conflicts between groups that could manifest in the engagement? • What micro-aggressions may human or automated moderators not easily detect? • Is there an increased risk of hacking or disruptions given the topic of the engagement? • Do some participants fear that their income, safety, or other aspects of their personal and professional life might be affected if they participate? • Is the engagement addressing potentially sensitive topics that could re-traumatize participants or trigger strong emotional reactions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate guidelines for respectful participation • Develop a moderation strategy for online discussions (criteria for responding, deleting or ignoring behaviour; preferences between automated or manual moderation; and a schedule for moderating discussions given the risk level) • Consider the need to host separate engagements for groups at risk of harassment • Provide staff training (e.g. regarding historical context, anti-racism, conflict de-escalation, etc.) • For higher-risk contexts, design engagements that are invitation-only, with a low public profile, and password-protected access • Consider whether anonymity would increase participant safety or embolden online harassers; avoid anonymity in cases of greater participant interaction • Provide links to mental health supports, or invite support workers (e.g. counselors, Elders) into the engagement to connect directly with participants



Barriers	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Privacy and Data Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who owns or can access the data collected through the engagement platform? How long will it be stored, where and how?• Might video-sharing intrude on some participant's privacy when connecting from home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate engagement platforms' privacy policies in plain language, and ask about concerns• Give preference to platforms with secure, domestic servers, end-to-end encryption and password-protected access• Inform participants about plans to record audio, video or chat data in live meetings• Establish policies and procedures for secure data handling and storage, communicating these to participants• Do not attribute participant names to ideas in notes; anonymize data sets• Invite participants to connect without video, or share tips on creating a virtual background
Financial Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If participants receive financial compensation in the form of cash payments, will this impact their ability to receive income assistance with earning restrictions (e.g. Canada Emergency Response Benefit, disability assistance, unemployment insurance)?• Is the form of financial compensation accessible for participants? (e.g. cheques and e-transfers may be inaccessible for individuals who lack a bank account, email address, or are unable to access their bank in person or online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If offering financial compensation, discuss the most appropriate and meaningful form of payment with community members and partners

